

Paper-11



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Carl Elliott's essay "Amputees by Choice" deals with the complex issue of 'apotemnophilia' a condition identified so far as a psychosexual disorder. A broad definition of it would refer to healthy people who seek amputations to feel complete at the core of their being. The tradition of seeing this condition strictly as a part of sexual desire has linked those who are aroused by the sight of amputees, 'acrotomophiles' with those who are attracted to the idea of an amputee, 'apotemnophiles'. The majority of material available in the internet that is sexually oriented and populist demarcates these two categories as 'devotees' and wannabes' respectively. However, there is a recent paradigm shift in the perception and treatment of apotemnophilia, due to the increasing number of people who manage to get amputated in hospitals merely for this, or in cases where they fail, amputate themselves. If one could consider apotemnophilia in similar terms as gender identity crisis where transgender people feel trapped in the wrong body, the overtly sexual aspect attached to this condition could be warded off, so as to bring in a pragmatic approach to deal with it. Dr. Robert Smith, who had carried out a few controversial amputations on apotemnophiles who claimed to be happy with their changed physical selves, even considers it as a neurophysical disorder with biological roots. However, the ethical issues related to performing an amputation of a perfectly healthy limb of a patient have invited a lot of debate. It remains to be seen whether it can be seen as similar to sex reassignment surgeries. In the present circumstances in which people suffering from this disorder are taken into serious consideration, the incidence of amputations catering to apotemnophiles may increase drastically in the years to come. The after effects of such surgeries can be far reaching and unique. In the case of sex reassignment surgery, the

patients may not have to undergo as much practical difficulties in life as in the case of an apotemnophile who would manage to get an amputation as s/he desires. Living without a limb calls for many related issues, and may leave the patients dependant on others for the rest of their lives. The fact that they would consider this situation desirable may make the issue complex, but one has to make sure whether they can be seen the better judges on the matter.

If apotemnophilia happens to be a sexual disorder similar to pedophilia or necromancy, it has to be kept in check for the greater common good. One could not let an individual harm another individual in the civil society. Similarly, an individual has to be stopped from harming her/himself even as s/he considers it to be for the good. If doctors are allowed to amputate perfectly healthy limbs to fulfill apotemnophiles' desires, there will arise a large number of related issues in the medical issues, perhaps diverting proper research and treatment of other serious diseases where surgery is inevitable. It is better to dissuade amputations on apotemnophiles for these reasons.